

# Heart in Hand

## Postscript

In Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*, the lovers seek to escape the self-serving world of "day" and merge together as one unified being in the world of "night," the realm of permanent reality. They seek, together as one, a godlike, eternal union, where their separate selves are erased. The path to their sublime goal is sexual love.

George Crosby, in his simple way, was well connected to this realm of underlying reality, living each day in the eternal present with compassion.

Mystics know it, and music lovers can also tap into this realm. I gained a searing glimpse of it one day in 1984 listening to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* in the arms of my wife, Linda.

Sex, compassion, mysticism, and music tell us, when we are open to intuitively sense it, that there is a deeper level of reality that underlies our individual, self-interested concerns. In particular, this study of life has taught me to better appreciate the importance of compassion. It enables us to sense the true, inner nature of things. Compassion provides us with a key to the castle of ultimate reality. And, as I was at first surprised to learn, it is the simple and guileless *fool*, in the guise of a medieval Parsifal or a 20<sup>th</sup> century Broadway Danny Rose, who can most readily experience compassion. A fool, with a thin layer of ego and little intellect, can feel compassion much more readily than well-educated, intelligent people. Compassion is also the bedrock of a moral life. And it keeps us healthy.

In carrying out this project I was struck by how close a biological connection we humans have with other living things. Just how tight this connection is was not well appreciated when I attended medical school more than thirty-five years ago. It turns out that a human being—all 100 trillion cells of one—can be viewed, in essence, as a highly evolved bacterial community with a multibillion-year history. We are, in a sense, "walking communities of bacteria," as the microbiologist Lynn Margulis and science

writer (her son) Dorion Sagan put it. Before some of them combined to form a more complex eukaryotic cell, bacteria were part of a stable and enduring living system that has blanketed the planet and survived for billions of years. Left alone, as we have seen, bacteria, having no nucleus, simply clone themselves. Our bacteria derived eukaryotic cells are evolutionarily designed to reproduce themselves through sex. And, as we have also seen, the biologic price of sex, and individuation, is death.

The biological connectedness of life, along with the fact that the composition of all matter in the universe at the subatomic level consists uniformly of the same leptons and quarks, fits well with what Schopenhauer considers to be the metaphysical underpinning of the world—that all things are interconnected in an all-encompassing oneness.

I predict that Schopenhauer will once again come back into favor in the next century and be more widely read than he has been in this one. His work will reassume the importance that it had latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of late 20<sup>th</sup> century deconstruction, I expect that in the next century more efforts, like this one, will be made towards reconstruction and a more integrated worldview.

Schopenhauer pierces the fog of our species' propensity for hypocrisy and deceit like a laser. Vanity and the importance of wealth and fame wither under his glare. Integrity, not much valued in late 20<sup>th</sup> century public discourse, may once again become a valued human asset, spurred on by a renewed appreciation of his work. Also, as people consider more carefully his work, the philosophical and moral importance of compassion will be better appreciated. Sex will be placed in clearer perspective, with its true nature and significance better understood. The importance of the arts, particularly music, will be better appreciated, and supported. God's fool, the mystic, will be accorded more respect in the next century than such visionaries have received in the one now ending. Their sense of underlying reality will come to be more accepted that it is now in our self-seeking, materialistic culture. Will all this happen? I hope so.

I believe that Schopenhauer's insights on life and the nature of human existence will prove to be of great help to human beings in the next millennium, and that Woody Allen's major movies will remain in print.

If there is anything that you might wish to say to me about this book, or if you have any insights that you might like to share, please contact me. My email address is [dwm@u.washington.edu](mailto:dwm@u.washington.edu), or [donaladm@swedishheart.org](mailto:donaladm@swedishheart.org). You can obtain a printed copy of this book, in hardcover or paperback, directly from the publisher, at [www.xlibris.com](http://www.xlibris.com). It can also be purchased through Amazon.com ([www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)) The photograph of George Crosby that I refer to in the chapter on compassion, along with photographs of Wilhelm Furtwängler, Jack Kerouac, and Thelonious Monk, with links to websites about them and other individuals and subjects that I have discussed in this book, can be found on my website [donaldmiller.com](http://donaldmiller.com) ([www.donaldmiller.com](http://www.donaldmiller.com)).

I hope the material presented here has enriched your view of the nature of life.

Donald Miller

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